

THE PRECURSOR, THE PROPHET, AND THE POPE.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE HISTORY OF THE BAHAI MOVEMENT.

BY ROBERT P. RICHARDSON.

SO long as sectarian religion plays a notable part in the activities of the human race, the religious prophets and the cults that have them as central figures will offer no small interest to those who study the social organism. One of these prophets and the sect that has grouped itself around his name—the cult of Baha'u'llah, the case which is perhaps the most pregnant of all in the instruction it can afford—I took up in *The Open Court* of August 1915, in an article entitled “The Persian Rival to Jesus, and His American Disciples.” Of the reception accorded to this I have assuredly no cause to complain; my little essay found a far wider circle of readers than I had anticipated, and impartial reviewers gave it an appreciation that was most gratifying. The Bahais, it is true, have not looked with favor upon my efforts; but, though they voice their disapproval in no uncertain terms, and denounce me as an enemy to “the sacred cause,” they utterly fail to meet the points I raise in criticism of the Bahai movement. Objection is made to my strictures as a whole, but there is no attempt to take them up in detail and show that I am in error; I am met by reiteration of the Bahai pretensions and passionate denunciation of all who dare question them, but by nothing that can be deemed a reply.

One implication that the Bahai apologists would seem to make is however worthy of notice: my information, they say, is drawn from “turbid sources” and I narrate misdeeds attributed to the Babis and Bahais by their adversaries. In other words, it is contended that in my account of the two sects I have given credence solely to their enemies, and have taken pains to gather together all that these enemies say, without weighing in the other scale the attempts made by Bahai writers to exculpate their heroes from the accusations brought against them. To demand an impartial hearing

is wholly reasonable, but had I not, in fact, already given precisely such a consideration to both sides in my examination of Bahaism, I would never have allowed myself to pass judgment upon the movement, much less have published the results of my investigations. I began to investigate the subject wholly without prejudice, and it was only after carefully examining the Bahai claims that I acquired, as a "postjudice," a strong conviction that they were false. It is to be noted, indeed, as a fact not without its significance, that the Bahai advocates, instead of frankly taking up the grave accusations that history brings against the Babi and Bahai leaders and controverting them one by one, have always adopted the policy of silence. Hearing both sides is the very last thing that the Bahai apologists would wish an inquirer to do. A great part of the voluminous literature put forth in Bahai propaganda quite ignores the serious charges that have been brought against the Bab and Baha. And where, by exception, reference is made to a few of these charges—I say "a few," for never have I found all or even the greater number taken into account—they will be carelessly dismissed with a "defense" largely based on the supposition that the "high spirituality" shown in the Babi and Bahai scriptures makes any accusations against their sacred authors wholly incredible.

This stand, it need hardly be said, has not been taken by me. I am compelled to regard it as untenable. No sober minded investigator could write history on such principles. All our experience goes to show it to be not alone in art that men with the morality of a Benvenuto Cellini produce works whose inspirations to us are of the highest. Again and again do we find writers and preachers whose lives will not stand the light of day upholding the most exalted ideals and advocating a lofty morality that they themselves do not practice. For example, "The Universal Prayer" of Alexander Pope (which is decidedly above the best of what Baha'u'llah has put forth) breathes a spirit quite unlike that which ruled the daily life of the despicable little hunchback who penned it. Even, then, were all the utterances of the Bab and Baha'u'llah pregnant with lofty inspirations; even though we found nothing but exhortations to the highest morality and could draw from them a moral code of supreme excellence, we could not on that account infer that the career of either prophet was without stain; much less could we safely take it for granted that their disciples were faultless and that no discreditable deeds have marred the records of the Babi and Bahai sects. To ascertain how they really conducted themselves we must consider their practices as well as their precepts.

This I have done, and I have by no means accepted indiscriminately all that has been said against the Babis and Bahais, but have carefully weighed in the balance the pros and cons of each case. Many of the derogatory statements made by the enemies of the new sects I did not see fit even to mention in my previous article. I did not, for instance, put down the statement of a European traveler that the Bab in his mercantile career at Bushire, before he became a religious reformer, "was noted as a person of irregular and eccentric habits, possessing somewhat indefinite ideas of *meum* and *teum* and consequently better known than trusted." Neither did I record the tale of the believer who went with gifts to the heads of his sect at Adrianople, and was scandalized by coming upon the two brothers, Azal and Baha, in the course of an unseemly quarrel and hearing each of these saintly characters cast aspersions upon the chastity of his brother's wives and reproach the rival prophet for practices not mentionable in polite society but only (in the Occident) discussed in works on sexual pathology. I did not give currency to the Azalite contention that at Acre a Bahai could secede from the flock of Baha'u'llah only at the peril of his life; that two men who fell away in their allegiance were murdered by the disciples of the Blessed Perfection in the Caravansary of the Corn-sellers and the bodies buried in quick-lime on the premises where they were ultimately unearched; and that four other recusants only escaped a like fate by precipitate flight from the town. Nor did I refer to Haji Jafar, a Bahai of Acre, who had lent to Baha the sum of twelve hundred pounds, and demanded, with inconvenient importunity, the payment of this debt. The result, the Azalites say, was that at the command of Mirza Aka Jan of Kashan, one of the lieutenants of the prophet, the old man was killed and his body thrown out of the window of the upper room which he occupied in the caravansary, the report being then spread by the Bahais that their victim had cast himself out of the window to die for the sake of "the Beloved."

Again, in my former article, I told of but two Babi insurrections, those of Mazandaran and of Zanjan,¹ though these were

¹ In my previous article on page 464, line 6, read, not "in the province of Zanjan," but "at Zanjan, in the province of Khamasa." Other errata are: page 464, line 8 from below, read "W. H. Dreyfus, in his *Le Babisme et le Behaïsme*"; p. 466, line 28, read "For fourteen more years Azal was the nominal leader"; p. 468, line 2 from below, read "a fight in which two Azalites and one Bahai were killed"; p. 473, line 9 from below, read "Mirza Jani's History"; p. 474, line 9, read "Dr. Jessup"; line 12 from below, read "to add to the Bayan eight Vahids of nineteen sections each." On p. 471 I erred in stating that Baha waited until the death of one of his first two wives before taking a third; he had three wives (or two wives and a concubine) at a time.

not the only ones brought about in Persia by the followers of the Bab. There were, among others, two insurrections at Niriz, the first of which began at the same time as that of Zanzan, but did not have quite as long a duration as the latter, coming to an end the day after the Bab was executed at Tabriz. The Mohammedans say that in the first Niriz insurrection the Babis gave free vent to their passion for loot, and moreover indulged in arson and the indiscriminate slaughter of Moslems without regard to age or sex. This particular accusation however does not seem to be verified, and I have given it no credit. Yet my rejection of the charge is based entirely on the lack of sufficient evidence in its support. I cannot regard the behavior ascribed to the Babis at Niriz as in any way inconsistent with the character of the Babi insurgents. The leader in these Niriz disorders was that very Seyyid Yahya of Darab who so proudly boasted that he intended with his own hands to kill his father if the latter did not accept the new religion of the Bab (a fact handed down to us, in proof of the holiness of the sainted Seyyid, by a Babi historian), and a man who would kill his own father for unbelief might, we can well believe, not scruple to put to death the infidel women and children of Niriz.

In fairness we must admit that the Bab himself did not sanction the wanton slaughter of those who rejected his revelation. He explicitly bade his followers to spare the lives of all infidels save those who, in the Holy Wars to which the Bab obligated his people, might be killed defending their hearths and homes from the Babi bands. But the sweet mercies of the Bab extended only to life and limb, not to property; he urged his disciples to strip the unbelievers to the skin; so when Mulla Mohammed Ali at Zanzan gathered together all the valuables that could be found in the houses of the wealthy townfolk he was merely following out the precepts of the *Bayan*. To loot was, with the Babis, the performance of a religious duty provided the victims were infidels and were systematically despoiled of their goods under the efficient directions of a Babi chieftain. Individual acts of pillage were frowned upon by the Bab, and he expressly tells his people that when, as merchants, they do business with Europeans they must meet their financial engagements with the most scrupulous exactitude. The reason he assigns for this is interesting; it is not because infidel European creditors have a right to payment of what is owing them, but because Babi debtors who do not pay Europeans may suffer very unpleasant consequences. As intimated above, I have not given credence to the report that the Bab, as a Bushire merchant, was guilty

of fraudulent practices, yet, in consideration of the doctrines he taught, those of us who agree with Archbishop Whately that "Honesty is the best policy, but he who acts on that principle is not an honest man" will not be inclined to ascribe to the Bab any very high degree of integrity.

It is obvious from the instance just given that the sacred writings put forth by the Bab contain admonitions which are assuredly not those of a lofty morality. His admirers, in asking us to judge Babi practice solely by Babi precept, would seem to know **but little** of the contents of the Babi Bible, the *Bayan*. The internal evidence of the Babi scriptures, which could not in any event suffice to make good the pretensions of the forerunner of the Bahai prophet, are, it happens, quite sufficient to condemn them. The Bahai writers picture the Bab as a reformer who prepared the way for Bahaism by mitigating the errors of Mohammedanism. With impressment they point out to us that this teacher of a purer morality revoked the Mohammedan ordinance by which the killing of idolators was enjoined on the faithful as a religious duty. But they neglect to tell us that the Bab went on to say that his disciples, when they got the upper hand over other sects, must despoil the unbelievers of all that they possessed "except in the cities where this is impossible" in order to force them to embrace the true religion, and reproached, for their mansuetude, the Mohammedans of past times, who, the Bab holds, ought in the dispensation of his predecessor, Mohammed, to have "made the whole world Musulman" by forcing the inhabitants of each city they conquered to embrace Islam. The Mohammedans did not do this, and hence the unhappy infidels, who might so easily have been saved, are, the Bab tells us, now burning in the fires of Hell.

Mohammed himself was lax enough to prescribe that Jews and Christians, provided they paid tribute, might be allowed to dwell undisturbed under Musulman rule, and in later days the more liberal interpreters of the Koran sought to derive from the sacred text a like privilege for other unbelievers. Zoroastrians were usually given the benefit of the doubt, and some commentators went so far as to contend that any infidel save and apostate Mohammedan might be allowed to live in peace in a Musulman country. In the time of the Bab the religious principles of the Persians had so far relaxed that even apostacy from Mohammedanism was frequently tolerated or, to be more precise, ignored by the authorities. Islam contained liberal minded and humane men in the very days when the Bab's disciples were throwing themselves at the throats of their opponents

and the zealots among the Mohammedans were exhibiting a like bigotry and barbarity. The Musulman mayor of Tabriz, a philosophical mystic, who, as the Babis themselves say, "did not entertain aversion or dislike for any sect" is a case in point; another case is that of Sheykh Murtaza of Nejef who (again according to Babi testimony) did his best to discourage persecution of the Babis and other heretical sects. And while admitting that the work of the Bab was not wholly for evil and that a thoroughgoing Mohammedan would perhaps be worse than a thoroughgoing Babi, we must none the less hold that a latitudinarian Musulman who does not take the Koran too seriously or one who strains a point to give it a humane interpretation is far more fit for civilized life than a devout follower of the Babi law.

The Babi preachings, the efforts of the Bab and his apostles to kindle the fires of a purer religion from the embers of degenerate Mohammedanism, resulted in a recrudescence of religious fanaticism. The recruits of the new sect came chiefly from the Puritan elements of Islam, which Babism welded together and made a power in the state. Men like Mulla Mohammed Ali of Zanzan, who had long made himself a nuisance by insisting upon the observance of all the details of the Holy Law of the Koran, continually urging the public authorities to adopt drastic measures with the worldly minded recalcitrants, took up the Babi banner. The events that took place at Zanzan give a good illustration of the course followed by the converts to the religion of the Bab. Here Mohammed Ali laid particular stress upon the Bab's prohibition of tobacco, and his followers were able to intimidate the town people to such an extent that, as he boasted, "the unbelievers no longer dared to smoke the kalyan in the bazaars." Complaint was made to the Shah who summoned Mohammed Ali to Teheran and, after reprimanding him for his behavior, forbade him to return to Zanzan until further notice. Mohammed Ali however soon slipped quietly out of Teheran and went back to stir up more trouble at Zanzan where he counted his adherents by the thousand. The authorities feared to arrest him, and for a while a sort of armed truce was maintained between the Babis and the representatives of law and order. But one day a Babi got into a fight with a Musulman, stabbed him, and was arrested. Mohammed Ali made repeated demands for the release of his follower without success; the man languished in prison for a whole month, at the end of which time the Babis broke open the jail and, according to their own account, released all the prisoners "from the murderers down to

those guilty of every minor crime." Then government troops were sent to the province of Khamsa, and civil war began.

The Persian Court, which in the ordinary course of events deprecated religious zeal and frowned upon the efforts of the Mohammedan mullas to stir up the Musulman people against the heretics in their midst, became alarmed at the course taken by the Babi propaganda and leaned to the side of the clerical party. The mullas were allowed to work their will on the Babi heretics, and after the attempt to assassinate the Shah in 1852 the government not merely gave them a free aid of the secular arm but was itself the heart of the persecution. My opponents seem aggrieved that I have not given some account of the martyrdoms that mark the Babi and Bahai annals and told how (especially in the great persecution of 1852) the Persian officials vied with each other in devising terrible torments for their victims to undergo. That this would be of moment in a history of Mohammedanism or a history of Persia is true, but just how it is relevant to an examination of Babism and Bahaism is not clear to me. Almost all religions have, at their origin, undergone persecution, and the severity with which the persecution is carried on is a measure, not of the merits of the new religion, but of the demerits of the old one. To show that in the councils of the Persian and Turkish governments in the nineteenth century the spirit of humanity was conspicuous by its absence would surely have been a work of supererogation, nor does any one need to be told that Mohammedanism has too often shown itself a religion of blood. The question is: Were the Babis equally prone to commit crime in the name of religion, or were they at heart peace-loving citizens goaded into violence by wanton persecution?

Going back to the very inception of the movement we find that the first killing in the heretic hunts was due to the Babis, this being the cold-blooded murder of a Mohammedan mulla. Did the Babis disown this deed as the individual act of misguided members of their body? Not at all; the perpetrator was given safe refuge by his coreligionaries of Mazandaran who, be it noted, had as head the greatest of the Babi apostles, Huseyn of Bushraweyh. And when the sect put forth a history of these stirring times we find the believers, not regretting this and other deeds of violence, not representing them as retaliation for acts of their enemies, but, on the contrary, glorifying these crimes and looking upon them almost in the light of religious duties. Nor does the Babi historian, Mirza Jani, disdain to cast a glance into the future, and tell us exultantly that a day shall come when seventy thousand Mohammedan mullas

will be beheaded "like dogs." At Zanjan the Babi leader on capturing Farrukh Khan, a former Babi who had recanted and fought now on the Musulman side, is said to have first skinned his captive alive and then roasted him. Farrukh Khan, when captured, was at the head of twenty-two other soldiers of the government forces who, besieged in a house in Zanjan by the Babis, were, as the latter say, induced by "fair words" to lay down their arms and surrender. These too were executed, the Babis tell us, though it is not stated that they were skinned and roasted.

The partisans of the people of the *Bayan* would have us dwell on the cruelty of the Mohammedans toward the new sect and on the fortitude with which the Babis endured the gruesome tortures inflicted upon them, while leaving well in the shade or completely suppressing the records of the cruelty and crimes of their own party. I cannot consent to do this, and I must indeed confess that the picture of a murderer or an accomplice of a murderer submitting to torture without a tremor does not cause me to feel any admiration for the criminal, and utterly fails to arouse my enthusiasm. In fact, whether the sufferers be guilty or innocent, when I am told of men, having imbedded in wounds made in their bodies burning wicks steeped in oil, being paraded through hostile crowds to the place of execution, all the while singing songs of joy to testify to their willingness to undergo martyrdom, the impression this gives me is not that the victims belonged to the higher types of humanity, but that they as well as their torturers were of the same type as the Indian savage who goes to the stake defiantly singing his war song and taunting his captors upon whom he would promptly have inflicted the torture of fire had they been in his power instead of he being in theirs. The insensibility to pain exhibited by the religious fanatic by no means shows an unwillingness to inflict it upon others. Those who are unaffected by their own sufferings are usually among the least humane of mankind. Sympathy for the sufferings of our fellows is bred by susceptibility to pain and is not found with the callous savage.

That many of the Babis executed for the attempt on the life of the Shah were wholly innocent there can be but little doubt. Yet, even when the reprisals were at their height, the animus that actuated the Persian officials was not a religious one. This is shown by the fact that Baha, the future prophet, who even then played a notable part in the affairs of the sect, was arrested and, according to the Bahai account of the matter, gained his freedom, not by denying his faith, but by convincing his judges that he was in no way

implicated in the plot against his sovereign. His argument, as reported in the *Traveller's Narrative*, was that "No reasonable person would charge his pistol with shot when embarking on so grave an enterprise. From the very nature of the event it is clear and evident as the sun that it is not the act of such as myself."

The severity of the measures which the Shah ultimately adopted against the Babis does not appear unnatural in an Oriental monarch when the circumstances of the case are taken into account. Among the believers the doctrine had become wide-spread that to the Bab and his successors belonged not merely the spiritual power but the temporal as well, and that the ruling dynasty had no legitimate claim to the Persian throne. Babi apostles had even been known to threaten with the torments of hell-fire those who dared to lend their support to the government of Nasiru'd-Din Shah. Early in the troubles brought about by the sect the royal family itself had suffered; for in the first Babi insurrection, that of Mazandaran, two princes of the blood had fallen by the hands of the insurgents. Now came the attempts upon the Shah's own life. The Babis who sought to slay him, when questioned by the authorities after the failure of their attempt, stated that personally they were grateful to the Shah for certain benevolences which he had shown them, and that in trying to kill him they were only obeying the orders of their superiors who were clothed with sacred authority; that anything which these holy men commanded was necessarily right simply because they commanded it. Such a criterion of right and wrong is accepted even by the modern Bahais. In the "Tablet of the Most Great Infallibility," Baha'u'llah tells his flock emphatically that in a manifestation of the Deity (i. e., in himself) "no sin or error is to be found or spoken of"; that if God through His prophet "declares a virtue to be an error or infidelity to be faith, it is a truth from His Presence," if He declares the right to be the left, or the north to be the south. . . . water to be wine or heaven to be earth, it is true and there is no doubt therein; and no one has the right to oppose Him, or to say 'why' or 'wherefore'; and he who disputes Him is verily of the opposers in the Book of God." In a note to this "Tablet," the translator, Mirza Ali Kuli Khan, Charge d'affaires of the Persian Legation at Washington (where the presence of a Bahai may perhaps be accounted for by the fact of the Persian diplomatic corps representing rather the interests of Russia and England than those of Iran) is at pains to tell us that in this teaching Abbas, the pope, follows in the footsteps of his father, the prophet, since Pope Abbas

teaches that "the infallibility of a Manifestation of God is not to be judged by men according to their own limited view or estimate of the deeds of a Manifestation. But the Manifestation of God is infallible in the sense that He, as the Temple of God, 'doeth whatsoever He willeth'; and all that He doeth must be recognized by men as based on Divine Wisdom."

This doctrine, which can be characterized only as the most pernicious religious principle that any human being has ever dared to set forth—the very principle which actuated the religious sect known as the Assassins—has been constantly adhered to by the Babis and Bahais through thick and thin. Time and time again did members of the sect tell Professor Browne that, once convinced of the justice of the claims of a pretendent to prophethip "we must obey him in everything, for he knows better than we do what is right and wrong." Nor did they hesitate to draw the logical conclusion that murder committed in the name of religion was highly meritorious. "A prophet," they said, "has the right to slay if he knows that it is necessary, for he knows what is hidden from us; and if he sees that the slaughter of a few will prevent many from going astray, he is justified in commanding such slaughter. The prophet is the spiritual physician, and as no one would blame a physician for sacrificing a limb to save the body, so no one can question the right of a prophet to destroy the bodies of a few that the souls of many may live"!

Just how high in the Babi hierarchy were the men who ordered the "removal" of the Shah it is impossible to ascertain. Azal, though he then stood at the head of the Babi flock, cannot be assumed to be responsible for the plot against the Persian sovereign. It would be a mistake to regard the Babi sect of these days as a well-organized body ruled in all its activities by a supreme commander. Even during the lifetime of the Bab the temporal affairs of the sect were largely under the control of his apostles. Some of these, in fact, were given a veneration but little below that in which the Bab himself was held. Huseyn of Bushraweyh was looked upon as the *Babu'l-Bab* or Gateway of the Gateway, and when the Bab finally arrogated to himself still higher honors than that of voice of the invisible Imam Mohammed² and proclaimed himself to be the *Point*—a direct manifestation of Divinity—Huseyn was

² The supposed intermediary between God and man; the twelfth and last of the Imams, who disappeared in a subterranean passage in 940 A. D. and is, the Persians think, still alive, residing in one of the mythical cities Jabulka and Jabulsa. For an account of these see p. 299 of the notes to Professor Browne's translation of the *Traveller's Narrative*.

promoted to Babship itself, the Bab having, toward the end of his career, abandoned the title by which he is commonly known. To encourage his followers at the siege of Tabarsi, Huseyn did not hesitate to promise that those who died in battle should be resurrected in forty days, and would then be recompensed by the position of king or prince or at least governor of some part of the earth. The more ambitious Babi warriors who aspired to speedy death were allowed to select in advance their future kingdoms, Turkey or China, England or France or Russia. Mohammed Ali of Barfurush, who succeeded to the command of the Mazandaran insurgents after the death of Huseyn, was looked upon by some Babis as having filled the highest of human offices, that of "Point" during an interregnum in which the founder of Babism ceased to deliver revelations to the world. This apostle himself declared that he was the reincarnation of the Prophet Mohammed. Jani, the Babi historian, tells us that when the mother of the Barfurush apostle married his reputed father, Aka Salih, she was three months gone with child, and that she gave birth to her son six months after her marriage, wherefore his enemies subsequently questioned his legitimacy; but his friends interpreted the fact in a favorable manner, recalling the circumstances of the birth of Jesus. The story is also told that when Mohammed Ali had become prominent in the Babi sect he one day said to Aka Salih: "Know that I am not your son, and that your son lost his way behind a stack of fire-wood on such-and-such a day whereon you sent him on an errand, and is now in such-and-such a city, while I am the Lord Jesus who has appeared in the form of your son, and, for a wise purpose, has elected you my reputed father." Another Babi saint in whom self-conceit was not lacking was Kurratu'l-Ayn who looked upon himself as the reincarnation of Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet Mohammed, and told the people that any unclean thing was immediately rendered pure by being exposed to her gaze. The claims of the lady as well as those of her lover found a ready acceptance with the Babi herd who hailed the meeting of Mohammed Ali of Barfurush and Kurratu'l-Ayn with the cry: "The Sun and the Moon are in conjunction."

From the early Babis I now pass on to the modern Bahais whose cause my opponents have more particularly at heart. In *The Open Court* protest has been raised against the tenor of my previous article by Mr. Kheiralla, Mrs. Kirchner and Mr. Tobler. None of these meet the points that I raised; they lavish unstinted praise on the cult of Baha'u'llah, but make no reply to the specific

articles of my indictment. The letter of Mr. Tobler is, I think, of much value as a specimen of Bahai rhetoric and an exemplification of the mental attitude characteristic of the followers of Abdul Baha. He has however, it would appear, given but scant attention to the questions at issue. And it is rather amusing that, in reproaching me for not having consulted those whom he deems competent authorities on Babism and Bahaism, he actually cites three authors from whom it happens I did draw in the composition of my article, namely Count de Gobineau, M. H. Dreyfus and Mr. C. H. Remey. The first of these is really an authority: the only one in Mr. Tobler's remarkable list; the other two have as their sole claim to consideration the fact that they are representative Bahais. And had Mr. Tobler read the work of Count de Gobineau he would scarcely have committed the absurdity of citing this authority *in opposition* to my "allegations." The reference to Mr. Remey is likewise not very apt, for the latter though thoroughly devoted to the Bahai cause, is often more ardent than edifying. The perusal of his writings by outsiders is not likely to accrue to the benefit of the faith. I know, indeed, of one case where a man whose previous attitude toward the Bahai movement had been most sympathetic, after reading one of Remey's articles upholding the papal supremacy and the infallibility of Pope Abbas, threw the book on the floor, and said with some emphasis: "If *that* is the Bahai creed, damn Bahaism!" Mr. Tobler, in the further course of his remarks, intimates that the result of my article may be a St. Bartholomew massacre of the American Bahais. It is hardly worth while to dispute his imputation, but I would point out that since, according to Mr. Tobler, he and his coreligionaries are "joyfully willing" to "receive the crown of martyrdom" it is unreasonable in him to feel aggrieved because he conceives that I am trying to bring the American Bahais the joy they desire.

To the three Bahais that opposed me in *The Open Court* must be added a fourth opponent, Mr. James F. Morton Jr. who took up the subject in two letters to *The Truth Seeker*, a New York weekly devoted to the cause of freethought, but always scrupulously fair in giving a hearing to both sides of any question. In a previous issue of this periodical there had appeared an abstract of my *Open Court* article, and Mr. Morton, though a freethinker, was impelled to take up the cudgels for the Bahais. Like my other critics he neglects to show just where I am at fault in my strictures on the Bahai movement, though he asserts that "it would not be difficult to do so." He contents himself with specifying

certain ways in which Bahaism appeals to him, and I shall proceed to consider the merits which he and my other critics ascribe to the cult of Baha'u'llah.

First and foremost among the claims put forth for Bahaism is its alleged promotion of love and unity. Kindliness toward those of other sects is fundamental in the Bahai religion, so we are told. The primary commandment, an advocate informs us, is: "Do not antagonize or denounce any religion." To follow Bahaism is "to never allow ourselves to speak an unkind word about another, even though that other be our enemy." Yet in Persia, Professor Browne found that the disciples of Baha'u'llah did not hesitate to refer to their Zoroastrian neighbors as "unclean pagans" and resented his association with these Guebres, while moreover they were circulating a work in which the Shiite Mohammedans are described as a "foul and erring sect." In Hamadan, where a portion of the Jewish inhabitants have gone over to Bahaism, the adherents of the older faith claim that "the continual attacks of the Bahais against the Jews" have produced the result [in 1914] of "hatred and bitter dissensions between fathers and sons, sisters and brothers, husband and wife." Turning to the Occident we find that Mr. Horace Holley, in his recent work on Bahaism, refers to Catholic practice as "a diabolical perversion of Christ's teaching," and in lurid language speaks of "the servant-maid who betrays her instincts to a priest lurking in his dark confessional." Whether such epithets be justified or not, it is quite clear that they do not tend toward bringing about that era of good feeling in matters of religion which is so ostentatiously paraded before the outsider and the neophyte as the primary aim of the Bahai movement.

Further enlightenment as to the efficacy of Bahaism in the promotion of religious concord is afforded by what has taken place in the very bosom of the sect. Here, if anywhere, we ought to find unity and harmony. Are we not told, in a pamphlet with the alluring title *Unity through Love*, that "in the future years . . . the people of Baha will not diverge and disagree as Christians have done." The reason given for this bright outlook is not however a very convincing one, it is "because they cannot. The dissenters, the reformers and expositors will no longer be Bahais. They have excommunicated themselves by their divergence; they have turned away from God."

Like statements are often made by Christians; there is but one Christian church, we are told, all the others are mere shams. And the actual state of affairs in Bahaism is quite similar to that in

Christianity. The Bahais are rent into two mutually hostile factions: The Orthodox or Papal party, headed by Pope Abdul Baha Abbas, and the Protestants, most of the latter owning allegiance to another son of the Prophet and a half-brother of Abbas, Mohammed Ali. The American adherents of the former usually write *Baha* and *Bahai*; those of the latter commonly spell these words with an *e*, writing *Beha* and *Behai*, but this rule is not absolute. The orthodox apply, as a term of reproach, the name *Nakazeen* or *Nakizis* (deniers) to all who admitting the claims of the Prophet, deny those of the Bahai Pope, whether such heretics follow the lead of Mohammed Ali or not. Mr. Kheiralla is a Nakizi, and that he is not especially friendly toward the orthodox Bahais of Greenacre is shown by his reference to these people (in language more disparaging than I myself have seen fit to use in my account of the Greenacre affair) as Bostonians who "cheated Miss Farmer out of her property known as Greenacre." The attitude of the Papal party toward the Bahai heretics may be judged from what a pious follower of Pope Abbas tells us in a pamphlet entitled *The Dawn of Knowledge and the Most Great Peace*. "Can anything be more abominable, loathsome or abhorrent to refined senses than the disgusting spectacle of a dog vomiting up a mess of partly digested food, then turning around and licking it up again! Yet this, the Holy Spirit has declared, is how the violators of the Covenant appear to the faithful."

The doctrine of the Covenant is the Bahai dogma in which is embodied the claim of the leader of the sect to papal power. The idea seems to be this: that in the present dispensation—the dispensation of Baha'u'llah, which the Bahais claim has superseded that of Mohammed, just as (they hold) Mohammedanism superseded the Christian dispensation—God has made a covenant with mankind that he will not empty the vials of his wrath upon any human being who accepts His prophet, Baha'u'llah, as the latest manifestation of the Deity, and takes the inspired utterances of Baha as law. So far, there is, I think, substantial agreement between all fully initiated Bahais, in other words, all save the neophytes who are allowed, for a time, to look upon Bahaism as a merely humanitarian doctrine having as its keynote the brotherhood of man. The Nakazis, to be sure, are not in the habit of using the word "covenant," yet none the less do they look upon faith in Baha'u'llah and obedience to his ordinances as essential. But the orthodox true believers go still further; unwilling to rely upon their own interpretation of the sacred writings left by their

Saviour, they feel a necessity for a "Center of the Covenant," as they rather curiously put it, that is, for an infallible interpreter of the inspired words of the Bahai Messiah, Baha'u'llah. This Center of the Covenant they find in the person of Abdul Baha Abbas, the son of Baha'u'llah. The Nakizis, then, are those Bahais who claim the right of private interpretation of the Bahai scriptures and hold that the Covenant needs no "Center."

How important in the eyes of the orthodox Bahais is adhesion to the Center of the Covenant may be judged from the statement of the Bahai book, *Explanations concerning Sacred Mysteries*, that "Whosoever is, in this day, firm in the Covenant and the Testament of God, and turns unto Abdul Baha in compliance with the decisive command of the Blessed Perfection, he is of the companions of the right hand, and is of the exalted letters; such a soul is day by day in advance and progress and his death is conducive to loftiness and eternal life. On the other hand, whosoever violates the Covenant of the Blessed Perfection, and turns away from Abdul Baha, the Center of the Covenant, he is every instant declining, is a follower of natural desires, one of the companions of the left hand, and one of the letters of the hell-fire"; and "He who is not firm in the Covenant of God is of the hell, the doors of the Kingdom are closed unto him....How great will be the punishment which is appointed for such a soul after his leaving the body!" According to this, not only are the unregenerate persons who reject Bahaism *in toto* doomed to perdition, but even Mohammed Ali and the other members of the Prophet's family and *entourage* who decline to admit the claims of Abbas to infallibility are destined to the very bottommost pits of hell! So kindly a forecast brings home to us in a striking way the universal love and charity that pervades the Bahai movement, and convinces us that it is not without reason that one of my critics ascribes to the followers of Pope Abbas a "breadth and tolerance" which is "in pleasing contrast with Judaism and Christianity."

Friendly relations are not however always interrupted by a belief that one's neighbor is doomed to perdition. Catholics and Calvinists have been known to live together in peace without allowing their religious differences to interfere with the usual social amenities. Surely this should have been the case with the sons of the Prophet of Love. Does not Mr. Phelps tell us, in his *Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi*, that if we analyze this peculiar spirit of the Bahais; if we seek to penetrate that which marks them off from other men, the conclusion to which we are brought is that

its essence is expressed in the one word *Love*. These men are lovers; lovers of God, of their Master and Teacher, of each other, and of all mankind." Nowhere, we may well conclude, would the teachings of Baha'ullah be more fruitful than in the Bahai community at Acre; here, and especially in the bosom of his own family, his influence ought to have made itself felt and have shown that tendency to peace and harmony which the Bahais rate so highly. Abbas, we might suppose, would be content with consigning his brother to hell, and Mohammed Ali would rest satisfied with a polite denial of his destiny of damnation. This has not been the case; accusations and recriminations have been bandied back and forth between the two parties, and to prevent physical conflicts it has been necessary to call in the aid of the Ottoman police.

Abbas bases his papal pretensions upon certain documents supposed to have been written by Baha'u'llah, and Mohammed Ali likewise relies on the writings of the Prophet in disputing his brother's title to the spiritual throne. Neither will acknowledge the other's title deeds to be genuine; each accuses the other of altering and interpolating the manuscripts left by their father. In reply to the question: "Has Abbas dared to change the texts uttered by Baha'u'llah?" Mohammed Ali and his adherents answer: "Most certainly, Yes. We have in our possession *many* texts of Baha'u'llah which have been changed by Abbas Effendi." According to them, whenever Abbas came across an unpublished "Tablet" of Baha containing anything inconsistent with his own pretensions, he either cut out the portion which went against his assumption of authority and palmed off the remainder as a complete tablet in two portions, or, if this was not practicable, suppressed the sacred text altogether. And Mirza Aka Jan, amanuensis of Baha for forty years, who on his master's death took the part of Mohammed Ali, goes so far as to assert that Abbas forged an entire tablet in trying to make good his claims. Against Mohammed Ali the partisans of Abbas make quite similar charges. The Protestant Bahais assert that Abbas, when his father died, unjustly appropriated the whole of the latter's property, and while each week ostentatiously distributing a large sum of money to beggars, left his father's widows and their children in penury until the Turkish government stepped in and forced him to disgorge. The Papal party, on the other hand, accuse the half-brothers of Abbas of being profligate and wanton, of frequenting wine shops and of being spendthrifts, and say that

they pawned valuable rugs and jewelry of the deceased Prophet—goods to which they had no right—and squandered the proceeds.

Shortly after the death of Baha, Abbas and his adherents commenced to erect on the side of Mt. Carmel above Haifa an edifice designed, so they said, to serve as a mausoleum for the bodies of the Prophet and his forerunner, the Bab, there being also included in the building a hall for devotional purposes. Mohammed Ali went to the Turkish authorities and represented to them that this structure was really designed to serve as a fort, and that Abbas and his followers intended ultimately to use it in an attempt to make themselves masters of this part of Syria, which they hoped to wrest out of the control of the Ottoman government. That the contention was not unpalatable is shown by the impression the edifice produced upon an Occidental Bahai belonging to the Papal flock who visited Acre a few years ago: "After seeing its massive walls and solid masonry, we did not wonder that the Turkish Government might believe that the Master was building a great military fort."³ It would not be the first time in the history of the movement that a tomb was used to further a revolt, for in the insurrection of Mazandaran the Babis had as their headquarters the mausoleum of Sheykh Tabarsi, and so strong a fortress did it prove to be that within its walls they were able to withstand a siege of nine months duration.

At all events, this attempt on the part of his brother to stir up the authorities against him, caused much inconvenience to Abbas and his followers, though finally they were allowed to proceed with the construction of the tomb. Even then however their troubles were not over. The adherents of Mohammed Ali, men who had the full benefit of that teaching which, the Bahais say, will turn this world of strife into a dove-cote, men who had passed year after year in the irresistible atmosphere of love and harmony that radiated from Baha'u'llah, men among whom were included three sons of the Prophet and many other prominent Bahais, notably the beloved disciple designated by Baha as "The First to Believe," Mirza Aka Jan of Kashan, "cursed and insulted the visitors to the Holy Tomb of the Blessed Perfection," so the Papal historians say. And, as we are told, "Finally it was feared that some of the youthful believers would no longer be able to endure the evil tongue and cursing of the Nakazeen, and a disturbance would arise which would be contrary to the tranquil disposition of the Bahais and would desecrate the Holy Tomb. Consequently His Holiness

³ Mrs. C. True in *Notes taken at Acca*.

Abdul Baha asked the local government to supply a guard to accompany the believers upon the days of visiting the Holy Tomb, so that they might be protected from unseemly disturbance and be able to engage in prayer and devotion with composure."⁴ On reading of these facts, one wonders whether there is not a spice of humor in the statement of a certain Bahai writer that the Most Great Peace which Bahaism is to bring will be "a peace which passeth the understanding. "Perhaps there may be none, for Bahais have a very peculiar way of looking at such matters. Not long ago, at a public meeting, a Bahai proselytizer lauded the religion in glowing terms for the great harmony it invariably brought about, and when one of the audience, who had seen something of the movement, made the comment that her experience had been quite the contrary, that in no sect had she seen more discord than among the Bahais, she was met by the triumphant reply that that was just it, that this apparent inharmony was the very proof of their harmony!

The schism of the Bahais into the followers of Mohammed Ali and the orthodox adherents of Abdul Baha Abbas took place shortly after the death of Baha in 1892. Not all the original supporters of Abbas have remained among the faithful. From time to time members of the Papal flock fall away from grace and become Nakizis. Abbas is obliged to be continually warning his people against the pestilential heretics who would lead them astray. "You must be very careful, perchance amongst you may be those who will be Nakazeen, the violators of the Covenant. Do not listen to them." The Most Great Branch (which is one of the titles of Abbas) has to repeat to his people again and again that "In the Tablet of The Branch He [the Prophet Baha] explicitly states: *'Whatsoever The Branch says is right, or correct; and every person must obey The Branch with his life, with his heart, with his tongue. Without his will, not a word shall any one utter.'* This is an explicit text. . . . So there is no excuse left for anybody. No soul shall of himself speak anything." The faithful are to bear in mind, Abbas modestly says, that "Any opinion expressed by the Center of the Covenant is correct, and there is no way for disobedience for any one." And he tells his flock that at pres-

⁴ Mirza Aka Jan ("Khadim'u'llah") asserts that he was cruelly beaten by the followers of Abbas at the express commands of the Pope and was even insulted and struck by the latter in person. Other details of the controversy between Abbas and Mohammed Ali will be found in an article by Dr. Carus, "A New Religion, Babism," in *The Open Court*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 411ff. Portraits are there given of Abbas, Mohammed Ali and other members of the family of the Bahai Prophet.

ent the importance of the Covenant "is not known befittingly; but in the future it shall attain to such a degree of importance that if a king violates it to the extent of one atom he shall be cut off immediately"!

Not content with the role of a mere interpreter of dogma, Pope Abbas tries to stretch to the utmost the prerogatives of the Center of the Covenant, and claims, under the name of infallibility the right to direct the daily life of the faithful. To avoid being called a Nakizi, a Bahai must let the pope of the sect rule his doings as well as his dogma, since the infallible interpreter so interprets the dogma of infallibility as to make it mean much more than infallibility. For their very goings and comings the Persian Bahais are bound to obtain previous permission from the Pope, and a member of the flock who arrives in a strange country without a written permission to travel and a papal certificate of orthodoxy must be shunned by all true believers. "Write to every one," Pope Abbas tells one of his American lieutenants, "and awaken all, that they must not meet any Persian who has not in his hand a credential in my handwriting and signature." And, on another occasion, to all the "believers and maid-servants" throughout America this notice is sent: "Whosoever from amongst the Persian believers arrives in America although he may be related to me, that is, even if he be my son-in-law or she be my daughter, first ask of him the letter giving him a *new* permission to come again to America. If he shows you any such letter, be most careful and attentive that it is my writing and my signature, that they may not be counterfeits. Then you cable to me and inquire about him, otherwise do not associate with him. . . . Whosoever speaks with him is a violator of the Covenant." Even Occidental Bahais find it advisable to obtain a written permission from the Pope when they change their place of residence. Quite recently a Bahai lady, Mrs. Getsinger, who after carrying on propaganda work in India had been permitted to dwell for some time with the "Holy Family" at the foot of Mt. Carmel, left Syria for the United States, and, though to all the American Bahais she was well known as an ardent and faithful believer, it was thought necessary to publish in the *Star of the West* of October 16, 1915, a reproduction in facsimile of the passport issued to her by Pope Abbas granting permission to "the maid-servant of God, Lua" to come here.

Complete submission to the papal power is a *sine qua non* with Abbas. Woe to the Bahai who dares to disobey him! "Any soul," he says, "who violates the Covenant and Testament in the least degree, immediately he is cut off; even in this material world

he will become afflicted with remorse and regret." Most of the American Bahais have taken these admonitions to heart and are very punctilious in obedience to their pope; they carefully shun and avoid the stranger until he produces a certificate of orthodoxy. Their attitude was shown in 1913 when two Persian Bahais landed in San Francisco from a Pacific steamer and attempted to attend divine service at the Bahai meeting place in that city. These newcomers, having no credentials, were, as the *Star of the West* tells us, "advised to leave and return to their hotel." And while later they were entertained at the home of one believer unmindful of the commands of the Pope, the more faithful members of the flock gave no sanction to this lapse from loyalty. They were indeed highly scandalized and brought the case before His Holiness himself, who wrote back a pastoral letter which in emphatic terms commended the Bahai assembly of San Francisco for excluding the strangers and blamed the disloyal one who had received them as guests.

It is proverbial that in religious movements the Americans among the converts distinguish themselves by the financial support they afford. And it is his American followers, above all, that Abbas appears anxious to keep in the full bloom of orthodoxy. We may see a connection between these two facts without attributing to the Bahai pope any sordid motives of personal gain, but merely supposing him to have in view the needs of his church. The rivals of Abbas seem to have scented the rich pickings to be had in the United States, for the Bahai Pope says that "all the enemies of the Cause in Persia—Yahyais [i. e., Azalites], Naka-zeen and Sufists—are turning their attention to America and will come in order to weaken the Cause of God." These competitors for American money—"thieves," "wolves," and "traitors" as he deems them—cause the good Pope much anxiety, and he seems to be unable to give complete trust even to his own household. He specifically warns the Americans not to receive his sons-in-law, Mirza Jalal, Mirza Mohsen and Mirza Hadi, or his grandsons, Shougi Effendi and Rouhi Effendi, without credentials from his hand. When they become suspect, even those connected with him by family ties are given scant consideration by Abbas. A year or so ago the husband of his wife's sister, the venerable Mirza Asad-u'llah of Nur, a Bahai apostle who had well-nigh worn out his life in the service of the Prophet and the Pope; who upon the death of the father of Abbas had been among the foremost of the supporters of the claims of the latter to the succession and to papal power, fell under suspicion of the Center of the Covenant and was

promptly branded a Nakizi; all the faithful were henceforth bound to avoid him as though he were the pest. In vain was Abbas asked the reason for this excommunication; all explanation was refused, but it would seem that the Ultramontane Curia of Acre suspected Asad'u'llah of a tendency toward liberalism. And when a little later, in the spring of 1914, his son, Mirza Ameen'u'llah Fareed (who had interpreted into eloquent English the discourses made by Abbas when the Pope was in America in 1912, but had fallen into disgrace from his connection with Asad'u'llah) left Egypt, where Asad'u'llah was then staying, and went to England, Pope Abbas felt it incumbent upon him to send, through Mirza Lotfullah, the Papal Delegate to the British Isles, an urgent message to the Bahais of England forbidding them to associate with or even meet Dr. Fareed or any of his relations. Not all the English Bahais heeded this charitable mandate, but those who disobeyed paid the penalty of expulsion from the fold, and the orthodox Bahais now look upon them as accursed Nakazeen. In obedience to the command of the Pope the orthodox promptly excluded the mother and sister of Dr. Fareed from the chapel of the "Religion of Unity" when these ladies ventured to present themselves there to participate in the Bahai devotional exercises. And when certain recalcitrant Bahais gave a reception with members of the Fareed party as guests of honor, one of the orthodox bell-wethers (a prominent Washington Bahai who was then in England) stationed himself outside the house where the reception was held, and solemnly warned all who entered that it was "forbidden" to have any communication whatsoever with the Nakizis within, and that to disobey meant to be put under the ban of His Holiness Abdul Baha. The result of all this was that the English Bahai world soon found itself in the throes of a serious schism, and the breach has not yet been healed. Not long ago Mirza Asad'u'llah came to the United States to inaugurate here a religious movement of an eclectic and syncretic character, "The School of the Prophets," which is to have in its doctrines none of the bigotry and intolerance of papal Bahaism. And it was probably he and his companions that Abdul Baha had in mind when, in a communication to the Bahais of this country, dated Haifa, October 14, 1915, he said: "It may come to pass that some corrupted souls shall come to America working to bring about the wavering of your hearts; but you must be firm like unto a mountain in faith and the Covenant."